

GRAPEVINE

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Easter — Hope

Dear Friends,

We approach Easter with more earthly hope than we did last year. The vaccine programme is working well and the wretched Covid-19 pandemic seems to be retreating in the UK at least. If you have had your job do consider sponsoring someone around the world not so fortunate as yourself – Charities Aid Foundation are accepting donations of £5 and more without costs at www.cafonline.org/home/covid-19-fund. We look forward with hope to sometime in the summer when some of the restrictions we have been under will lift. But...

As Christians we should be looking to a much more glorious hope – The Easter Hope!

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name
On Christ the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand*

Edward Mote 1834

This Hymn has found a revival – because it says what we need to keep believing and

doing - our lives should not be built on the sinking sand of this world but on the solid rock of Christ. *Matthew 7²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."*

At St John's Welling and St John's Erith we are in the process of re-building. St John's Welling is looking to come out of the Pan-



demic stronger than we went into it – but all schemes of man (and woman and Adam) will come to nothing if we don't continue in prayer. What should continue? What should cease? What should start? The contemporary 4 o'clock service is something we hope may re-energise our life in addition to 10.30 and 6.30.

At St John's Erith we are more than half way through Neil's and my initial 2 year

period and are happy to celebrate new life and growth, but we need to strengthen all our engagement to ensure we are fit to represent Christ as a biblically faithful bride of Christ. We need to reach all the new homes in the Quarry with the Good News – and all the Industry towards the Thames – and to address the mental health issues which have increased during Covid. I hope the leafletting that is beginning to take place and the re-launch of Alpha may help us in this.

Why do I write this to both Welling and Erith? Because we are Kingdom people and need to support and pray for the whole Kingdom. Welling, Erith and the ends of the Earth! I have learnt so much from my time helping lead St. John's Erith in this year of Pandemic, the most important lessons being reminders that Church is nothing without people, only a social club without God, powerless without His Spirit, and nothing if we don't Worship God and make Him known. *"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."* John 17³
May God bless you

Adam

Adam Foot, Vicar St. John's Welling and Priest in Charge St. John's Erith

St John's News

We are coming out of the tunnel, we really are and there is a real danger we may soon be meeting more in person than on line... at least on Sundays!

One of the real positives that has come from this strange season is that we have learnt to use technology in a way that pre lockdown, we knew was possible but hadn't utilised. We now know **Some** gatherings are definitely as good via zoom (see below) or at least the positives are not insignificant... and for sure, things will never be quite the same again with, as a definite, live streamed services being a vital part of Church life enabling housebound people to join in worship. So, hardly necessary to say that the last two months have continued, like the two before, with maybe limited occasions of note but our sermons and studies on the **Christian Com-**

munity have reminded and challenged us again and again of the nature and potential of a God empowered Christian community, even in lockdown and have been preparing us for the days ahead and there **are** new things!

Adam and Gordon have introduced an online **Compline service** four nights a week at 9pm and many of us are finding it a helpful way of ending our day... (do consider joining.)

Another new development has been the **Parents group** which meets weekly (on zoom!) on Thursday evenings... this is a group which works really well on zoom as parents can join without need of a babysitter!

Saying that earthly Goodbye is never easy and sadly **Dorothy Holmes-Jones** died very soon after the last Grapevine issue. It was a real privilege to be able to join her live streamed funeral and celebrate and learn so much about a lovely member of our church family. We continue to pray for John and the

family.

Many of us have been praying for **Katherine Parker (Charlie and Di Amis's daughter...** long time members of St John's) since her cancer diagnosis last July. Her courage as she underwent many chemo cycles was awe inspiring. Sadly by mid February her treatment became end of life care and although we knew this, we have all been struggling with real sadness following the news of her death on Feb 28th. Many of us met (on zoom) that evening to grieve together and pray for her family and Everyone struggling to come to terms with the news... we continue to both grieve and pray.

Graham Curd and family need our love and prayers as they mourn Graham's Mum Do-reen.

...So, let's keep close to God and increasingly to each other... We have much to look forward to in the coming months and doubtless a challenge or four.

Estelle Woodcock



INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

Well, what a year 2020 was! With the pandemic we saw a massive increase in the level of violence against those in poverty - increased vulnerability to trafficking, an explosion of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) as western paedophiles had more time at home online and greater violence against women, trapped at home with their abusers during lockdowns. We experienced a significant increase in the need for our work at a time when funding was challenged by the economic impacts of COVID. UK lockdown hit just before our major fundraising month of the year.

- The Philippines marked our 100th conviction for OSEC.
- IJM Romania launched a new project to combat human trafficking. Their first case involved the UK.
- We saw IJM staff and survivors helping local communities by providing essential supplies and PPE kits and training.
- And God graciously provided finances through our amazing supporters and staff who found creative ways to fundraise, enabling us to exceed our income targets!

Thank you for your prayers and financial support. You have brought freedom and hope in the midst of darkness and despair.

Our 2030 Vision is to rescue millions, protect half a billion and make justice for people who are poor unstoppable. It feels impossible, like the first manned flight to the moon! But in God all things are possible.

Please pray for:

- God's protection, provision and continued breakthrough.
- Our Romania office as they work cases in conjunction with the UK.
- Our new casework office on the coast of Kenya, working child sex trafficking cases and the ongoing trial of 5 accused in the killing of our lawyer in Kenya.

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- Our UK team providing input to a review of sentencing for OSEC crimes and for our Virtual Fundraising Gala in March.

You can do more by becoming an IJM [Prayer Partner](#), [Champion](#) or [Fundraiser](#).

Steve Webster, IJM



And in total, there have been
57,000 PEOPLE
rescued from slavery and
violence since IJM began.

So we pressed into prayer. IJM UK started lockdown by stopping work for a whole day and praying. Subsequently, IJM generated a literal global wave of prayer by its staff, starting in Washington DC and moving across 13 different time zones, ending in Ghana. At the start of 2021 IJM UK staff again stopped for 36 hours of continuous prayer. In July 2020 our prayer supporters joined us for our first online Pray for Justice Event. This was followed by another event this last February. If you missed it check it out on [IJM UK's YouTube channel](#).

And our loving Father answered in ways we could never have imagined:

- Despite lockdowns across the world, we saw rescue after rescue, as we partnered with local authorities.
- Ghana saw 71 children rescued from slavery, 3 convictions, 24 survivors restored and 40 arrests.

ALSO IN 2020

You helped us facilitate one of IJM's largest rescues back in May, when the rescue of 360 people from forced labour in a brick kiln then led to the **RELEASE OF AROUND 6,750 TRAPPED MIGRANT WORKERS.**





Rukungiri Orphan Partnership

would like to accompany us. (This year for the Marathon, I

will be raising money for the deaf school in Rukungiri, one of the only mainstream schools that don't hide their children with disabilities away. We have also built up a good relationship with them on our visits). Please pray that the all the children and the teachers settle back well in all schools and that peace reigns across a politically divided country.

Sue Read

(the ramifications are still continuing, the opposition is still under arrest), it has been a trying time. But still their faith remains strong in the face of adversity. Some vaccinations are now happening albeit in small numbers. St John's was very generous during the pandemic and gave almost £5k through the church and through one particular housegroup (thank you, you know who you are) and food was distributed to school families and people who needed it in the town. Secondary Schools, Uni's, P6 and P7 are now back at Modern School with P5 and P4 returning in April and the rest of the school by June. Sadly, we have not been able

Whilst Covid 19 has been difficult for us here in the UK, it has been more difficult for poorer countries around the world, and particularly Uganda. Schools closed, no work, food in short



supply, people returning to their villages and unless they were able to grow a food source, were starving. Coupled with other illness (Alice and John were both very sick) and a very hotly disputed and very biased election

to go this year but we are hoping, God willing that we may be able to go after the London Marathon in October if we are allowed to. Start thinking about it if you

An Empty Paint Tin Meditation

Introduction: I blame it on the damp side of my shed, and it's need for another coat of Cuprinol protective paint. So this month, (February), I endeavoured to give that vulnerable side it's fourth coat.

Revelation: Painting creates that quiet thoughtful meditative mode in humans that God utilises, and He revealed that whilst the paint would last forever in a sealed tin, the tin needs to be opened and the paint brushed carefully onto a needy, thirsty surface, a process which not only uses up the paint, but also enables it to fulfil its purpose. Paint can be spilt and wasted, but with care it can add value and weather protection to all surfaces it comes into contact with. However, if it is just sealed in the can, it is only full of potential but of no real use.

Interpretation: We are like the paint; the living God is the painter. We need to open the can of our lives, and through the Holy Spirit become willing f to allow Him to use us as He sees fit, blessing the needy of the world with practical assistance, and thereby proclaiming that He lives, through Christ and His Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28 v16-20 the Great Commission)

Encouragement: I hope our lives will be fulfilled and useful to God, and when we finally depart, we might leave some beauty on earth behind us, and be rather like a well-used but empty paint tin, completely spent, but thankful to God for the chance to be so.

Mike Cosser



My Hopes for 2021

Reconnect. It is without doubt that many things should go first, vaccine, to see family and friends, to hug someone not in my family unit, but none of them come close to my true heart's desire. I long to see my children reunited with education settings. Our daughter no longer displaced, but back in her new home in Coventry, not here*, and our son safely interacting with his peers.

They are my world and I know how much I love them, and how much more God does. It is a concerning time for children and young people and the effects of this pandemic will be long lived in them. We do not know the deeper impact, yet we are assured by God that He does, and He alone holds us all in the palm of His hand.

As I write this, I have not been in the church building for a year, barring the alternative Christmas service, but I have been to church virtually far more during the week than ever before. We have also joined other churches and discipleship groups or training.

God has given us the tools to deeply invest our experience and worship of Him and in truth our children are covered in a hope that is not of this world but of that from Heaven. God will restore all the things that have been taken away and many new blessings will be given.

We have an opportunity to reconnect. I have reconnected with an old school friend and cannot wait until we can meet in person.

I am looking forward to 2021 being the year we reconnect in meeting together in person. I hope we will have opportunities to reconnect with mission, and our community locally, whilst also reconnecting more deeply with God, to the benefit of those He cares most about.

Billy jo O'Leary

*Charlotte is now back in University at Coventry – Reconnecting. Some sense of new normal is on its way



Do it Anyway

Found written on the wall in Mother Teresa's home for children in Calcutta:

People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

Mother Teresa

My Road to Christianity

My faith journey occurred over many years and was happening behind my back and against my will. I grew up with one parent who was an atheist and the other a non-practicing Christian, and I was one of six children.

My first recollection of Church was having to attend Sunday school and St Johns Church in Eltham, sitting through the boring Sunday Service with bags of smelly smoke wafting in the air. That set the scene for my relationship with God, even throughout my adult life. Then when one of my sons got cancer, my sister took her own life and my mum gave up on life within 6 months of my sister, my question was, 'how can a loving God cause so much pain?'

I worked diligently and provided a home and security for my immediate family but something was missing, but I didn't know what it was. I drank, and my behaviour caused the family pain.

Years later, my son had recovered from cancer, and all 3 children had grown up, Two of them were following God and shamefully, I was doing what I could to stop Terry from also following Christ.

Church, and someone spoke to me about God. I was doing my best not to listen, but on that occasion, it was being told that "we Christians are all broken" that still resonates with me today.

Then one Sunday morning as Terry was getting ready for Church, and I was about



to leave for work – epiphany! I attended Church for the first time! I totally enjoyed it; I felt the honesty of the Church.

Over the following months I started to think about my life's journey, I started to count my blessings. One of the first things

One day I had reason to attend St John's

I learnt about God is that he is at his strongest when we're at our weakest, and this matched my life. I realised that God had been present and active in all those major life crises.

He knew the plan He had for my faith journey could only start when I realised that I needed Him.

It was when I got baptised and wrote my testimony, that I realised God's influence on my life.

Now my thirst for knowledge and understanding of God grows daily. Each morning I can't wait to read and share the verse of day, I want people to feel how I feel!

Has becoming a Christian changed me? Yes, for the better. I've been baptised, confirmed, and I have the best Father anyone could ever have, and get to speak to him anytime. There is still a part of the old Jim within me, but now I know where to find peace.

I've read the Bible front to back, I read Scripture every day, I help with our Youth, I'm part of a House Group, and even my business has a new name "Evangelicab". Today I get asked to pray for others, and it's an honour to be able to introduce friends and family to God, who has a plan for each of our lives.

Jim Golding